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Vol. 1 #3

Boston, Feb. 14, 1831.

Beloved Friend:

If the most unremitted labor had not occupied my time since your departure, I should feel very culpable for my long silence. Without means, and determined to ask the assistance of no individual, - and, indeed, not knowing where to look for it, so unpopular was the cause, - you may suppose that I have been obliged to make severe personal exertions for the establishment of the Liberator. I am ashamed of the meagre aspect which the paper presents in its editorial department; because the public imagine that I have six days each week to cater for it, when, in fact, scarcely six hours are allotted to me, and these at midnight. My worthy partner and I complete the mechanical part; that is to say, we compose and distribute, on every number, one hundred thousand types, besides performing the press-work, mailing the papers to subscribers, &c. &c. In addition to this, a variety of letters, relative to the paper, are constantly accumulating, which require prompt answers. We have just taken a colored apprentice, however, who will shortly be able to alleviate our toil.]

I cannot give you a better apprehension of the arduousness of my labors than by stating, that it is more than six weeks since I visited Mr Coffin – perhaps more properly the Misses Coffin; for, certainly, there is no place in Boston I am disposed to visit so often as in Atkinson-street.

[By the editorial fraternity throughout the country, with hardly an exception, the Liberator has been received with acclamation; by the public – the white portion of it – with suspicion or apathy. Upon the colored population in the free states, it has operated like a trumpet-call. They have risen in their hopes and feelings to the perfect stature of men: in this city, every one of them is as tall as a giant. About ninety have subscribed for the paper in Philadelphia, and upwards of thirty in New-York, which number, I am assured, will swell to at least one hundred in a few weeks. This, then, is my consolation: if I cannot do much, in this quarter, toward abolishing slavery, I may be able to elevate our free colored population in the scale of society.

For the success of my exertions, I rely exclusively on the blessing of God. Unless His spirit quicken and sanctify, no eloquence, no argument, that I can use, will be productive. I know that mine is a righteous cause; and, if so, it must ultimately triumph. I am sure that man cannot be the property of man; and, therefore, that every slave has a right to his freedom. Why, then, should I shrink from the contest, or be embarrassed by doubt? I do not shrink — I cherish no doubt. I counted the cost before I went to the battle. I foresaw all that has happened. I knew that my motives would be impeached, my sanity doubted, my warnings mocked; but the clankings of chains broke upon my ear, — I looked up to Heaven for support, — and my resolution was taken.] × × ×

I have a huge volume of matters to write, but neither time nor room. This, you see, is but an apology for a reply. Next time, and very shortly too, I will do better. Our mutual friend Mr Sewell continues to increase in feeling on the subject of slavery. He is a man full of estimable qualities.

Give my affectionate and respectful remembrances to Mrs. May, and kiss your dear little boy for me, again and again.

You have forwarded $2 for the Liberator, but I intended to make you a present of the paper. The business shall be regulated when we meet.

Your first letter was duly received. I shall not be able to visit you in March; but no matter. Your address to the public would be worth a thousand of mine. Let them have it first, and then send it on to me for publication.

Your friend and brother,

~Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

Wm. A. Lawson
Feb. 14. 1831

Rev. Samuel J. May,
Brooklyn,
(Ct.)

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N. B. I beseech you, most earnestly, to occupy the columns of the Liberator with your essays, or any subject, as often as possible.

The noble philanthropist, Ladd, called to see me a few days ago. He spoke of you in exalted terms.